

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

June 24, 2024

ITEM NO. 7 ON CALL: APPOINTMENT OF WILLIAM FERBUSON (R) TO THE ETHICS COMMISSION TERM JULY 2024-2026

Sharon Pistilli, District 5 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

VOTE: The appointment of William Ferguson to the Ethics Commission was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 8 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN: "RESOLVED, THAT THE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED UNDER THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT (NAA) PROGRAM ARE HEREBY APPROVED, AND THAT THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS HEREBY DESIGNATED AS THE MUNICIPAL LIAISON OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD FOR THIS PROGRAM."

Laura Karson, District 4 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

VOTE: The Neighborhood Assistance Act resolution was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 9 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN: "RESOLVED, THAT THE PROGRAM YEAR 50 (OCTOBER 1, 2024 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2025) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) ANNUAL ACTION PLAN BE AND HEREBY IS APPROVED IN THE AMOUNT OF \$554,000, WHICH INCLUDES ENTITLEMENT GRANT FUNDS OF \$479,237 AND PROGRAM INCOME OF \$74,763; AND FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT WILLIAM A. GERBER, FIRST SELECTMAN OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD, BE, AND HEREBY IS, AUTHORIZED TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL NECESSARY DOCUMENTS TO FACILITATE THE TOWN'S RECEIPT OF THESE FUNDS AND PARTICIPATION IN SAID CDBG PROGRAM."

Michelle McCabe, District 4 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

VOTE: The CDBG Program Year 50 resolution was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 10 ON CALL: RESOLVED, THAT THE CHANGES TO THE RULES & REGULATIONS OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT PLAN ADOPTED BY THE EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT BOARD ON JUNE 5, 2024 ARE REJECTED.

Ken Astarita, District 1 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

VOTE: The resolution to reject the changes to the Rules & Regulations of the Town Employees Retirement Plan was rejected by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 11 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE: "RESOLVED, THAT THE BOND RESOLUTION ENTITLED, 'A RESOLUTION APPROPRIATING \$5,750,000 FOR COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PLANNING, DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION RELATED TO THE ROOSTER RIVER FLOOD MITIGATION PROJECT, AUTHORIZING GRANTS TO FINANCE \$2,500,000 OF SUCH APPROPRIATION, AUTHORIZING COST SHARE REIMBURSEMENTS TO FINANCE \$750,000 OF SUCH APPROPRIATION AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE THE REMAINING PORTION OF SUCH APPROPRIATION,' BE, AND HEREBY IS, APPROVED."

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Jay Wolk, District 5 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

VOTE: The \$5,750,000 bonding resolution for the Rooster River Flood Mitigation Project was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 12 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE: “RESOLVED, THAT A REALLOCATION OF THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDS PER THE ATTACHED EXHIBIT A BE, AND HEREBY IS, APPROVED.”

Steve Berez, District 7 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

Michelle McCabe, District 4 said there will be \$1.5 million left in ARPA after this reallocation and would like to make an appeal that these funds be used towards items such as public art, library materials, historical markers and for not-for-profit organizations.

VOTE: The ARPA reallocation was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 13 ON CALL: TO CONSIDER AND ACT UPON A MOTION TO WAIVE RULE 32 OF THE RULES TO REGULATE THE RTM REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE TAX RELIEF FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED HOMEOWNERS’ ORDINANCE, SECTION 95-7 TO SECTION 97-15.4 OF CHAPTER 95, ARTICLE III, OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD, SPONSORED BY THE SENIOR & DISABLED TAX RELIEF COMMITTEE.

Sharon Pistilli, District 5 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

Sharon Pistilli moved to postpone this item to the July meeting to provide public notice that these changes will be voted upon. The delay will not impact the Assessor’s Office.

VOTE: The item was postponed to the July 22, 2024 meeting by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 14 ON CALL: ETHICS ORDINANCE, SPONSORED BY REPS. BERCHEM, KARSON, WACKERMAN AND ZEZIMA (HELD IN COMMITTEE).

The item remains held in Committee.

ITEM NO. 15 ON CALL: TO FORM A COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE RULES TO REGULATE THE RTM.

Dave Rock, District 2 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

Jeff Steele, District 3 said this is long overdue and much needed.

VOTE: The formation of a committee to review the Rules to Regulate was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 16 ON CALL: “RESOLVED, PURSUANT TO FAIRFIELD CHARTER SECTION 6.1(G)(1), THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN PROPOSES TO THE RTM THAT THE RTM ENACT AN ORDINANCE THAT ALTERS THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EXISTING FLOOD AND EROSION CONTROL BOARD TO BE CONSISTENT WITH CURRENT STATE STATUTES BY (1) CHANGING THE NAME OF THE BOARD TO THE “FLOOD PREVENTION, CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND EROSION CONTROL BOARD” (HEREINAFTER “THE BOARD”); (2) ESTABLISHING THAT THE BOARD SHALL CONSIST OF SEVEN MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN, NO MORE THAN FOUR OF WHOM SHALL BE REGISTERED WITH THE SAME POLITICAL

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PARTY; (3) ESTABLISHING THAT, AT THE REQUEST OF THE BOARD, THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN SHALL APPOINT NO MORE THAN THREE ALTERNATE MEMBERS, NO MORE THAN TWO OF WHOM SHALL BE REGISTERED WITH THE SAME POLITICAL PARTY; AND (4) PURSUANT TO CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES, CHAPTER 477, SECTION 25-84, ADOPTS THE PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 477, SECTION 25-84 AND SECTIONS 25-85 TO 25-94, INCLUSIVE, AND AUTHORIZES THE BOARD, WITHIN THE LIMITS OF APPROPRIATIONS FROM TIME TO TIME MADE BY THE MUNICIPALITY, TO HAVE AND EXERCISE THE POWERS AND DUTIES CONFERRED ON SUCH BOARDS BY THE FOREGOING SECTIONS OF THE GENERAL STATUTES.”

Laura Karson, District 4 moved to waive the reading of the item, duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Amendment: Karen Wackerman moved to strike “pursuant to Fairfield Charter Section 6.1(G)(1), the Board of Selectmen proposes to the RTM that the RTM enact an ordinance” and substitute “that the RTM shall prepare a proposed ordinance, duly seconded.

VOTE: The amendment was approved by unanimous voice vote.

VOTE: The resolution regarding a proposed ordinance to alter the Flood & Erosion Control Board was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 17 ON CALL: “RESOLVED, THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH PUBLIC ACT 23-5 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING, THE REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD SHALL ESTABLISH TWO POLLING LOCATIONS FOR EARLY VOTING.”

Jay Wolk, District 5 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

Jeff Steele, District 3 said he doesn’t understand the reason to have 2 early voting locations when there are 14 days to vote. It doubles the cost, the chaos, the confusion and the need for security. He noted that early this afternoon the Body received information via email from Mr. Waggner, Dem. ROV with details that was not signed off by Ms. Politi.

Cathy Politi, Rep. ROV said the email was not sent to her; she had received it from the Moderator and had not seen it prior to this afternoon. She looked it over briefly and said the registrars had not discussed any staffing needs.

Mr. Steele asked why this information was sent out unilaterally. Mr. Waggner said they have different proposals and ideas to how early voting should work.

Amendment: Mr. Steele moved to amend the resolution to one polling location for early voting, duly seconded.

Mr. Steele explained he feels there are too many wild cards.

Sharon Pistilli, District 5 said she favors 2 locations.

Ken Astarita, District 1 asked if there are other towns with multiple early voting locations. Ms. Politi said she is not aware of any. Mr. Waggner said they have not heard what other towns are doing but said nationally jurisdictions have 3-5 locations.

Mr. Astarita said voters have ample opportunity with 14 days including 4 weekend days to early vote. He asked what is to prevent fraud with the voter checklist at multiple locations. Mr. Waggner said the official list is the Centralized Voter Registration System. The ballots are logged into the system so it would appear that

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the individual has already voted. Ms. Politi said she had submitted questions to SOTS regarding the paper lists but has not received a response yet. Poll workers can issue multiple ballots for the same election.

Mr. Astarita asked if there is a plan for security with SOTS, local police, FBI and Homeland Security. Mr. Waggner said they had a workshop and have started discussions about security. The voted ballots would be secured in their vault under the dual lock system. David Becker, Deputy Emergency Management Director said public safety and emergency management team will do what's necessary. Mr. Astarita said one location seems more reasonable and convenient given the costs and taking police off the street.

Karen Wackerman, District 9 said there is not a big difference in cost having two locations. 45 states do this.

Liz Zezima, District 4 said a town our size would benefit from two locations. She would appreciate receiving Ms. Politi's analysis of one location.

Dave Rock, District 2 said he prefers two locations over three; he has full faith in the FPD if necessary; he feels it's too early to compare to ourselves to other towns.

Melissa Longo, District 1 said if it were fewer days of early voting then multiple locations would make better sense. She asked how the ballots would look for early voting. Ms. Politi said the early voting locations would have all the ballots for each district which is why one location is less confusing and easier to control. Mr. Waggner said when people check in, they check the computer record and see which ballot they should be issued. Ms. Longo said it is very concerning that the ROVs are not working together on this. All RTM members are on the same email as a Body. The ROVs should be treated the same; they should be consulting and communicating with each other.

Chris Shea, District 2 said he has worked at polling locations; simplification is important and one location is perfectly adequate. Having multiple ballots at multiple early voting locations adds to confusion. He is worried about the logistics.

Cindy Wapnitsky, District 3 said she was originally in favor of 3 locations but now favors 2.

Colin Colburn, District 8 asked if the RTM will be voting on early voting locations every election to which Ms. Politi explained for every election the Town must submit an early voting plan including RTM approval for the early voting location. Mr. Colburn said it is very clear and concise that there is no recommendation for more than 1 location.

Christine Ludwiczak, District 8 said she supports one location and asked if CVRS goes down frequently. Mr. Waggner said in past experience CVRS becomes unresponsive once a week during busy season. The voter would have to be looked up on the paper list and their ballot would be separated until the system came back online. The computer is the checkpoint they have to utilize. Ms. Politi said SOTS has not responded to her questions regarding the paper lists.

Michelle McCabe asked when the deadline is to submit the early voting plan. Ms. Politi said the deadline is September 5, but we are late for the August primary. Ms. McCabe said the early voting information is not publicly available on the SOTS website. There is a recommendation that for towns over 20,000 people that the legislative body makes the recommendation. Ms. Politi said all of Fairfield County is using 1 location according to a survey. Hartford and Waterbury are using 1.

Mr. Steele said he still has not heard a compelling argument to support more than 1 location.

Karen Wackerman moved the question, duly seconded and carried with 31 in favor and 1 opposed (Havey)

Public Comment: Richard Dmochowski and Jennifer Damon spoke in favor of one location.

VOTE: The motion to have one early voting location failed with 8 in favor (Astarita, Britton, Longo,

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Sparacino, Shea, Steele, Colburn, Ludwiczak) and 24 opposed.

Mr. Waggner said at the committee meeting Or Hadash Synagogue was a potential site; since then, Fairfield Woods Library has become available which would be his recommendation. Ms. Politi said Old Town Hall is familiar to the voters. Staff is located nearby and the voted and unvoted ballots are in the building; it is a secure location and at the busiest times town staff will not be there.

VOTE: The resolution to have two early voting locations was approved with 24 in favor and 8 opposed (Astarita, Britton, Longo, Sparacino, Shea, Steele, Colburn, Ludwiczak).

ITEM NO. 18 ON CALL: “RESOLVED, THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH PUBLIC ACT 23-5 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING, THE REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD SHALL DESIGNATE OLD TOWN HALL AS THE POLLING LOCATION FOR EARLY VOTING FOR THE AUGUST 13, 2024 REPUBLICAN PRIMARY.”

Ken Astarita, District 1 moved this item as distributed, duly seconded.

VOTE: The resolution designating Old Town Hall as the early voting location for the August 13, 2024 Republican primary was approved by unanimous voice vote.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, MMC, MCTC
Town Clerk